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ABSTRACT

This booklet explains the meaning and sources of stress, presents a model differentiating among several approaches to dealing with stress, and offers advice and self-help exercises to aid in alleviating the causes of stress. Each chapter topic is a component of the stress alleviation model: stress awareness, tolerance, stress reduction, and stress management. Emphasizing that unknown stressors have more power over people than recognized stressors, the stress awareness chapter presents eight exercises designed to help administrators become aware of stressors. The chapter on tolerance focuses on techniques and exercises to facilitate tolerance of stress as well as tolerance of the feelings or statements of others that are different from the administrator's own. The stress reduction chapter mentions practical tips to reduce stress, problem-solving techniques, and relaxation exercises. In the chapter on stress management, the authors discuss interpersonal conflict, time management, and attitude adjustment. (JM)

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EXECUTIVE WELL-BEING
Stress and Administrators

by
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and
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Foreword

IN THE PAST few years a variety of materials have been published on the subject of executive stress. The sudden spate of books, magazine articles, self-help kits, etc., attests to the steady rise of stress in the world today and its deleterious effect on one's mental health.

For school administrators at all levels of educational management stress is not a new phenomenon. It's part of their professional lives and, one might say, an occupational hazard. That does not mean, however, that they must accept stress, no matter how severe, and suffer the resulting mental anguish and even physical consequences.

NASSP is pleased to present this monograph by the Giammatteos, former educators and school administrators who are now practicing psychologists. The material it contains tells readers not only what stress is and how to recognize it, but also offers practical advice and self-help exercises to enable them to alleviate the causes of stress.

Although we are school administrators, we are human beings first, subject to all the trials and tribulations that surface daily in the lives of executives throughout the world. If we are to be successful administrators we must learn about stress and how to handle it. We think this monograph provides a good start.

Owen B. Kiernan
Executive Director
NASSP

Introduction

ALBERT EINSTEIN WAS ONCE asked how he worked. "I grope" was his reply. Administrators and managers caught in the bind of having to grope are, in today's world, stressed.

Mark Twain said, "All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure." Confident people who are ignorant about schools, their management, and administration can cause the administrator additional stress.

Stress is created when several groups with ideals that differ fail to negotiate a new norm. Stress results when adaptation is demanded or a response that varies from the norm is required.

How an individual begins to respond to stress will provide a vital clue to the management, tolerance, or reduction of that stress. The difference between the perceived stress and the comfortable ability to meet it is tension. An administrator may cause distress by generating an overload of data upon which to base a decision. Stagnation or apathy can result from stress overload. This need not be the case, however; we can put this stress to use.

All people have a number of self-concepts related to their levels of performance in the various areas in which they must function. These attitudes about image control their ability to perform effectively. If they have an idealized n[illegible]ion of what a role is to be and their image of how they perform that role is positive, any assault on the role interpretation will cause stress.

This conflict between the ideal and the real also can create stress. People can develop attitudinal diseases that create stress as well. One cannot store up stress, waiting for the predictable collapse at weekend or vacation time. We are human and need to know how to deal with stress.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide some concepts and suggestions for administrators that will enable them to:

- recognize the successful practices used by administrators regarding stress awareness, stress tolerance, stress reduction, and stress management;
- implement at the department or building level, sound stress management practices, philosophies, and administrative strategies; and
- provide individual analysis techniques to assess their own situation for managing stress and stressors.

- *Awareness:* Knowing what the world of *is* looks like and sensing potential stress points — the lamp, the dog, the child, etc.
- *Tolerance:* Accepting the picture as a potential without having to fix blame on the unstable table, the poorly weighted lamp base, the child, the unwilling dog, or the dumb adult who was unaware of the potential destruction.
- *Reduction:* Take the lamp off the table before the child comes.
- *Management:* Arrange for the child to play with the dog outside, ban the dog from that room.

1. Stress Model

ALL OF US RESPOND to some degree when we are aware of threat or danger. How violently or calmly we react is under our control. How soon we react or how comfortable we feel about taking time for sensible decisions becomes a part of the stress world particularly of the administrator. The importance of the event or our reaction to the event are vital for stress management. Priority setting becomes vital. We tend to take band-aid approaches to distractions, which regardless of their priority become more consuming than our more important priorities.

The model for dealing with stress explored in this book includes four points: (1) awareness of stressors, (2) development of techniques to tolerate them, (3) means to reduce stress, and (4) a plan for the management of events that cause stress. These four points will be explained briefly in this chapter. In subsequent chapters, the concepts will be explored more fully with illustrations and specific exercises, applications, and techniques for putting them into practical operation.

Awareness

In nature, an organism generally responds to stress in the following way. First, it becomes aware of a stressor. After that, it tries to adapt in order to tolerate or to fight the stressor's influence, then to reduce the effects of the stressor, and finally to

manage the situation and the organism's response to the stressor. Administrators experience a similar flow.

Stress is what makes some people tick and others stop ticking. Don't try to beat the system — understand it, if possible. The more we understand it, the more we can use it intelligently to accomplish and achieve what we want.

The mind can determine how positively or how negatively our bodies will react to the perceived stress. The key is perceptions. Your perception, the community's perception, co-workers' perceptions, as well as your reactions to all of these perceptions are causes of stress. The first step in this management is to become aware of the things that cause stress. To begin the process of awareness respond to the following questions:

- Can you admit to yourself the laws, rules, themes that are annoying to you? (E.g., *law* — Public Law 89-10; *rule* — in this school district no one makes curriculum decisions unless they check with the superintendent's office; *theme* — these schools in this area should get back to the basics.)
- Are any of these also difficult to acknowledge or to follow?

Now, consider what happens when you break or contradict any of the rules, laws, or themes you noted. Did you conclude that themes, laws, rules operating in your working world cannot be contradicted or violated without a price?

The worry that something might happen can cause stress. The concern about how to react if it does happen often is a stressor. The reaction itself and the fear of long-term effects of your actions or lack of actions can cause stress.

We must be aware that stress reactions occur in response to the demands of two environments. The first is the external "must do" environment that details the demands of our job at the legal level. These "must do" items include following federal, state, and local laws and regulations. When we are not cognizant of these, when they are violated, we react at the awareness level with high anxiety. This type of reaction can be eliminated by knowing the results of the "must do" environment.

The second environment is the internal one that developed in us long before we became administrators. We must know what myths, beliefs, and values we will not allow to be distorted.

Part of our response to stress is to know when to develop new coping skills; when to collaborate with others for support; when

to ignore the stressful event; when to change an attitude about the event; when to acknowledge that the problem is not one we can manage at the time. The fact is, we must perceive the event that might cause stress as one that allows us the choice of what reaction we will *initiate*. If we use too much energy resisting the stresses we become our own worst enemies.

Stress can debilitate us, motivate us, or cause us to isolate ourselves by using unpredictable behavior. It is important to understand the concept of stress awareness because it can teach us the negative and positive consequences of stress. Often, when we become aware of those things that cause stress, stress can be eliminated. An important aspect of awareness is knowing the stressors, and recognizing our perceptions of those things that cause stress.

Two important questions that help define stressors are:

- What are my outward reactions to an event, policy, theme, rule, etc.?
- What are my positive and/or negative feelings as a result of the transaction with the event, theme, rule, etc.?

For example, telephone calls are a common stressor for administrators and managers. What do you do or say when the telephone rings? You answer it. Your feelings, however, might be, "I don't need this interruption."

If one of the "musts" of your school environment is to have an open door policy, consider the potential stress in the following situation:

Joe, your former vice principal drops by unannounced and wants to have a social visit. Your outward reaction would be to say, "Hi, Joe, sit down and let's talk." Inwardly, however, you might be saying, "This interruption puts me an hour behind in my paper work."

In part you have created your own stress. In order to cut off stress at the awareness level, you need to understand the "must" environment in which you operate: "I have to finish my paper work now, I do not have time to talk with Joe."

Tolerance

Tolerance to stress is determined in part by the stressors, but to a greater degree it is determined by our style of reacting.

Three major tolerance styles are: stimulus-based, response-based, and interaction-based.

1. Stimulus-based — when the style of our reaction is mostly determined by the trigger event; the trigger may be of such low priority we don't feel much stress. On the other hand, we attach so much power to the stimulus we get stressed before the reality.
2. Response-based — when our reactive style is the culprit and we overreact to a stimulus others consider minor. Often, we create our own stress when we use a reactive style that allows us to get stockpiled feelings out on the wrong, weak, or compliant target.
3. Interaction-based — when our style of responding is such that we forget our priorities and goals and get caught up in the interactional effects of the discourse.

Stress tolerance teaches us to alter:

- The importance of the action demand
  —Is this worth my emotions, my energy, my time?
- Our actual ability to cope
  —Is this a lack of technique or a lack of training that may cause me to react negatively to the stressor (e.g., legal terms, fact finding behaviors, grant writing, etc.).
- Our cognitive appraisal
  —I will rehearse multiple approaches to the stressor in my own mind prior to the event.
  —I will prioritize the approaches.
  —I will write the alternatives out so I can see what I have thought.
- Our view of shared and delegated authority
  —I will allow myself to have faith in others' abilities, which will grant me more support and allow me to better tolerate the stress.

When we become aware of the stressors, we must then determine the style to be used in responding. Recall Joe, the vice principal, who wants to talk for an hour. If you feel the visit is worth the good feeling it will generate, you must learn to tolerate the time bind it may cause. If you feel negative about the time expenditure, you must determine how much time you can honestly spare. "Joe, I've got five minutes to enjoy your company then

it's back to the tasks at hand." One form of tolerance is controlled by the time setting.

If your style is response-based, you might be excited or stimulated after Joe's visit. You might find it difficult to return to work. Here, you create stress for yourself by reacting long after your friend has left.

In order to avoid this reactive style, you might say, "Joe, I'm all tied up now. Can we get together later today? I'd like to talk some ideas over with you." You present a set time and show a genuine interest in seeing your friend, thus reconciling job demands with your personal needs.

Another example of a reactive style can be found in the following situation: You remain calm despite the negative stimuli at a board meeting. When you get home, however, your reactive style causes you to rehash the events, creating stress.

Tolerance is a balancing act, a mind set, and the ability to know the bottom line for you in your work world. Consider the mind set element as part of stress tolerance by reacting to the following thoughts.

We often wonder why the actions, thoughts, and emotions of others leave us baffled. This is especially true when they are totally contrary to our own way of thinking and doing. We simply cannot understand how others can do some of the things they do. When this happens, especially when the person is someone working with you, don't be too quick to judge. No two human beings are alike in their thoughts and emotions for the simple reason that no two human beings are molded by exactly the same experiences. Therein lies the source of the difficulty, the potential for misunderstanding.

Tolerance allows us to acknowledge differences without attributing hostility to those expressing varying views. It is better to believe in people. Most people want to succeed. Attempts at understanding will, at least, prevent differences in viewpoint from being needlessly distorted and exaggerated. The tolerance phase often is the one most practical for administrators to master. It consists primarily of our own attitude. It is not so much what happens to us that matters, but rather how we meet it.

Reduction

The reduction of stress can be long-term or short-term. Just

being aware of the stressor often can reduce the stress.

One way we reduce job stress is by being aware which of our worlds is the prime stress generator — the world of work, the social/recreational world, or the personal/home world. A balanced life composed of these three worlds can reduce stress. An overload can come from any or all of these worlds.

Which world causes you to feel strained? Can you block off one of the stressors before it even comes to your attention? Can you redraw roles and boundaries in certain social transactions so that the burden is shifted?

The stress reduction phase demands an active role. Awareness is often passive; tolerance may be passive; but stress reduction demands an active role for the administrator. Simply having a meeting every so often to identify and develop strategies to reduce stress provides a form of stress reduction because action is observable.

Management

The management tool that works is one that allows you to become aware of the problem, tolerate it when possible, and reduce or eliminate it. A wide range of activities, including "holding patterns," are positive forms of management.

A straightforward management tool is knowledge. When you become aware of your stressors you can determine which can be adapted so as to allow you to function with minimal stress. In other words:

1. Allocate less time to each stressor.
2. Disregard low-priority inputs.
3. Delegate low skill areas (those demanding less skill than you possess), and those where you have fewer skills than a staff member.
4. Create specialized groups to absorb inputs that would overload you as an individual.
5. Take phone breaks, when your phone is off the hook.
6. List priorities each day for the next day so your assistants can have all materials and resources ready.
7. Allow time for interaction with a trusted friend (this could include a family member) to give your emotions some down time.

When you feel you are overloaded with stress, consider

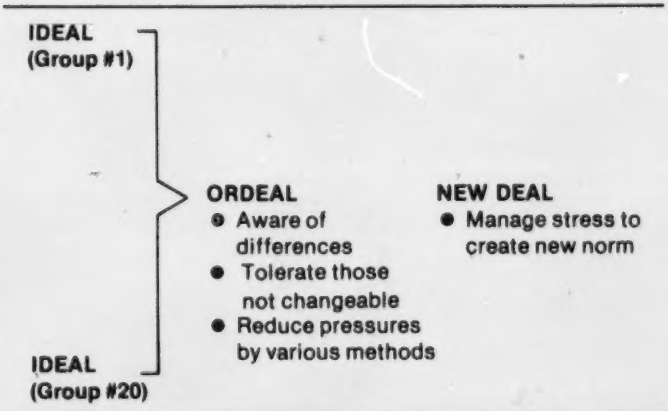
management for the protection of self before management of the school or the district. The following are self-protective devices:

- Omission — do not try to handle all stimuli.
- Ignore error — do not try to correct all failures.
- Filter — do categorize according to priorities.
- Approximate — do lower standards.
- Multiple channeling — do pass on; delegate authority to share the burden.
- Escape — do refuse to handle stimuli at all.
- Blame — do on occasion determine fault.
- Semantic solutions — do assign meaning to the event sc your view is also important.

It is not so much the event as your assignment of worth to the event that creates stress. Also, our reactions to events that we feel might damage our sense of worth are considered stressors.

Stress is the normal reaction to any perceived danger. Stress is when your Ideal goes through an Ordeal and the differing ideals won't come up with a New Deal incorporating the best of each ideal.

Consider how hard it is to change yourself and you will understand why awareness is as much a key to executive wellness as any tool known. Temper your sense of responsibility. Don't think and act for your whole office or school or district. Remember, no person is indispensable.



2. Stress Awareness

MANY PEOPLE GET the most out of life on a day-to-day basis. Others avoid life on a day-to-day basis. They worry about tomorrow and what happened yesterday. They lump all of life into the gross category of "problems." Other people pull everyone else down in order to climb up to higher places. These people may be reacting to hidden stresses rather than initiating positive actions.

Most administrators, simply by applying a few sound principles, avoid stress more effectively. Too many of us are reactive rather than preventive, preferring to live in the safety of our role rather than risking the goal orientation demanded of effective leaders. We fail to realize some fundamental principles related to executive and administrative well-being which can strengthen our ability to cope as well as enhance our confidence to initiate action:

- Awareness comes from human observations and deductions. It does not come from a wait-and-see attitude.
- Awareness does require that facts, imagination, and logic are available in readily understandable form.
- Awareness is based on personal expertness, not on the advice of some outside expert that is contrary to your intuition. Experts do have a role in a program of executive well-being, but awareness is in the eye of the beholder.

Sources of Overload: Awareness Exercise #1

1. Have you ever felt overloaded (felt strained to process all that's coming in)?
   _____YES _____NO

2. Have you ever felt overloaded for a prolonged period (a day or more)?
   _____YES _____NO

3. Do you feel overloaded most of the time?
   _____YES _____NO

If YES to Question #2 . . .

4. Think of the last time you felt overloaded for a prolonged period. List three general categories of things which you think contributed *in a major way* to your overload *in that situation* (for example, your job, making a major purchase, a new significant relationship, a dangerous environment, changes in your job, changes in an existing significant relationship, traffic, crowds, visiting a new place, changing residence, etc). The sources of overload need not be negative; they need only be stimulating. If you can't remember three *major sources* that's okay; if you can remember more than three, then by all means list them.

   a. _____

   _____

   b. _____

   _____

   c. _____

   _____

Sources of Overload: Awareness Exercise #2

Indicate how often the following items contribute significantly to your feeling of overload:

List the compiled topics gathered at a staff meeting	Almost Never	Not Very Often	Some-times	Often	Almost Always
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

Commonly noted topics, situations, events, people considered as 4 or 5 weights by your staff become group stressors. These should take collective priority this school year as a challenge for problem solving.

Awareness Exercise #3

The following chart is to be completed as indicated in the sample.

Sample

The Potential Stressor or Cause of Stress	My Outward Reaction to This Stress, or What I Do or Say	My Inward Feeling As a Result of the Transaction	
		Positive	Negative
• Open door policy . . . . . My old friend, Joe, formerly my vice principal drops by	You are always welcomed, no one is ever too important to pass the time of day with a friend		This puts me one hour behind on the paper work due by c.o.b.
• Open door policy visitors			
• Telephone calls			
• Paper work (memos, letters, grades)			
• Compliance with regulations federal . . . . state . . . . district			

- Community leaders
- Collective bargaining
- Lack of control
  time ....
  agenda ....
- Bypassing the chain of command
- Militant workers and staff
- Inadequate data as a basis for decisions
- Managing delegated tasks

- Lack of understanding by others of my goals
  - —staff
  - —students
  - —community groups
- Grievances
- Staff evaluation
- Feeling of inadequacy
- Too much authority
- Lack of authority to act in a professional manner
- Lack of friends

- Too many friends
- Role expectancies
- My personal style
- Lay boards
- Advisory boards
- My home life
- Other _____

Awareness of Potential Stressors: Awareness Exercise #4

I. Change Index

Yes	No	
____	____	1. New laws and regulations require frequent change.
____	____	2. I must change my management skills and techniques to keep pace with changes in education.
____	____	3. Late night meetings and conferences disrupt my daily routine and family life.
____	____	4. It is difficult to keep abreast of the literature in my area of administration.
____	____	5. Teachers expect my roles to be different than my administrative peers.

II. Impulsive Behavior

____	____	6. I do not interact well with colleagues who often disagree with me.
____	____	7. Our staff of administrators rarely get together on a social basis.
____	____	8. My peers and I seldom talk about home life and personal problems.
____	____	9. There is a feeling of competition rather than cooperation.
____	____	10. I confront students/staff so that there is an uneasy feeling when we do interact.

III. Role Clarity

____	____	11. My primary role is as disciplinarian and not as an administrator.
____	____	12. A pressure bind is felt between spending time at work or with my family.
____	____	13. I feel conflict between what I must do and what my values would have me do.
____	____	14. I feel conflict between community, staff, and board demands.
____	____	15. I feel conflict between doing paper work or interpersonal work.

IV. Under Use

Yes	No		
____	____	16.	I feel overtrained.
____	____	17.	My work is not overly challenging.
____	____	18.	My work is boring and lacks variety.
____	____	19.	I have a few areas of responsibility.
____	____	20.	I lack a sense of accomplishment.

V. Overload

____	____	21.	Deadlines are not realistic for the bulk of my tasks.
____	____	22.	I lack clear-cut authority to accomplish responsibilities.
____	____	23.	I often spend nights and vacation time finishing my tasks from work.
____	____	24.	Crises and urgency are the norm where I work.
____	____	25.	I feel guilty for relaxing during the school day.

VI. Organizational Structure

____	____	26.	I am restricted in my use of my own ideas and professional behaviors due to numerous laws, rules, and policies.
____	____	27.	I have little say in policy making, even though I must implement it.
____	____	28.	I do not get clear feedback on my performance in relation to the agency's goals.
____	____	29.	I delegate so much work I spend most of my time trying to get tasks done.
____	____	30.	My time is all blocked in with little time for personal planning.

VII. My Personal Work World

____	____	31.	My office space is too crowded.
____	____	32.	I have little control over the temperature in the office.
____	____	33.	The office is abnormally noisy and disorderly.

Yes	No	
____	____	34. The office set-up doesn't allow easy discussion or relaxation.
____	____	35. My door is open to drop-in visitors.
____	____	36. Telephone calls are frequent.
____	____	37. Staff interruptions are frequent.
____	____	38. The lighting is not adequate for the kind of paper work I do.
____	____	39. The school area near my office is noisy.
____	____	40. I lack personal storage space.

If your Job Stressors form has a total *Yes* answer count of 15-25 you are in the range of what many other educational administrators who responded to this form have averaged. Persons with score totals of 26 to 40 were the most stressed, and those 14 and below the least stressed. The awareness itself helped specify those stressors felt in common by other administrators. Use of the Job Stressor form reduced the anxiety of administrators by giving the felt stress a definition. Rather than saying, "I am stressed," the administrators talked about item 6, or 19, or the particular stressor. This narrowing of the "enemy" is a good technique.

Recent research indicates that there is a relationship between stress and illness, and that in many instances reaction to stress precipitates physical as well as emotional illness. There is some debate among researchers, however, as to whether illness is due to the fact of stressful life changes or how the person reacts to these changes.

Dr. Thomas H. Holmes, a psychiatrist at the School of Medicine, University of Washington, has devised a system to simplify the prediction and recognition of stress-related illness. Holmes and his colleagues constructed a scale of stress values measured in the form of 43 "life change units" (LCUs). Some stress is necessary, but too much is harmful.

Check the life change events which you have experienced during the past two years on the checklist that follows and add the points for your LCU total.

Life Change Units: Awareness Exercise #5

What is your stress score? A person scoring less than 150 on the scale has only a 37 percent chance of becoming ill during the next two years. A score of 150 to 300 raises the odds of illness to 51 percent, and a 300 plus score means you have an 80 percent chance of becoming seriously ill. To find your score, check the events applying to you during the past 12 months. Then add up the total values.

Rank	Event	Value	Your Score
1.	Death of spouse	100	_____
2.	Divorce	73	_____
3.	Marital separation	65	_____
4.	Jail term	63	_____
5.	Death of close family member	63	_____
6.	Personal injury or illness	53	_____
7.	Marriage	50	_____
8.	Fired from work	47	_____
9.	Marital reconciliation	45	_____
10.	Retirement	45	_____
11.	Change in family member's health	44	_____
12.	Pregnancy	40	_____
13.	Sex difficulties	39	_____
14.	Addition to family	39	_____
15.	Business readjustment	39	_____
16.	Change in financial status	38	_____
17.	Death of close friend	37	_____
18.	Change to different line of work	35	_____
19.	Change in number of marital arguments	35	_____
20.	Mortgage or loan over $10,000	31	_____
21.	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	_____
22.	Change in work responsibilities	29	_____
23.	Son or daughter leaving home	29	_____
24.	Trouble with in-laws	29	_____
25.	Outstanding personal achievement	28	_____
26.	Spouse begins or stops work	26	_____
27.	Starting or finishing school	26	_____
28.	Change in living conditions	25	_____
29.	Revision of personal habits	24	_____
30.	Trouble with boss	23	_____
31.	Change in work hours, conditions	20	_____

26

Rank	Event	Value	Your Score
32.	Change in residence	20	_____
33.	Change in schools	20	_____
34.	Change in recreational habits	19	_____
35.	Change in church activities	19	_____
36.	Change in social activities	18	_____
37.	Mortgage or loan under $10,000	17	_____
38.	Change in sleeping habits	16	_____
39.	Change in number of family gatherings	15	_____
40.	Change in eating habits	15	_____
41.	Vacation	13	_____
42.	Christmas season	12	_____
43.	Minor violation of the law	11	_____

Type "A" Behaving: Awareness Exercise #6

Are you a Type A? Do you characteristically exhibit Type A behavior? Quickly fill out the following questionnaire to see.

Yes	No	Don't Know	
___	___	___	1. I'm frequently in a hurry.
___	___	___	2. I'm typically doing several projects at the same time.
___	___	___	3. I'm always pushed by deadlines.
___	___	___	4. I usually take on as many (or a few more) projects as I can handle.
___	___	___	5. I really seek recognition from my boss and/or peers.
___	___	___	6. I believe it's important for a person to push herself or himself for success, and I seek out opportunities for promotions and advancements.
___	___	___	7. I enjoy competition in all areas.
___	___	___	8. I really enjoy winning, and hate to lose.
___	___	___	9. My job is the most important thing in my life.
___	___	___	10. I sometimes feel I neglect my family by putting my job first.

Yes	No	Don't Know	
___	___	___	11. I'm usually too busy with my job to have time for many hobbies or outside activities.
___	___	___	12. When I'm given a job I really feel personally responsible for its success—i.e., even though others may be involved, I feel that it just won't come out as well unless I'm personally involved from start to finish.
___	___	___	13. I have trouble trusting people easily.
___	___	___	14. I tend to talk fast.
___	___	___	15. When speaking I believe in giving special emphasis to my meaning with strong vocal inflection and gestures.
___	___	___	16. I feel some impatience in most meetings and conversations—I just wish they would speed up and get on with it.
___	___	___	17. I tend to get irritable and lose my cool easily when obviously simple things don't go right.
___	___	___	18. I make a list of things I must get done each day.
___	___	___	19. I generally have strong opinions on most things.
___	___	___	20. I don't seem to get much time to keep up with my reading.

If you answered yes to 15 of these questions, you may be falling into the "Type A" behavior pattern.

A "Type A" personality is one who is always pushing, doing, creating, initiating, and who may be headed toward an early death or heart attack.

We are trying in this chapter to focus on being aware of your world of *Is*, not *Ought*. Review what has filtered out from your self-assessment. Are there areas of concern that are under your control? Are there areas of stress you can perhaps tolerate by an

attitude change? Are there behaviors you can change to reduce the stress or the effects of the situation? Are there organizational changes you can institute and implement to manage the stressors?

The consciousness raising that we are doing often can reduce stress by providing knowledge. In addition, the exercises may have given you a better fix on priority items for you and your emotional well-being.

Try the following exercise for fun and emotional profit. Work it through three times: once for your world of work; once for your social and recreational world; and once for your personal/family world.

Script Analysis — A Way to Grow in Awareness: Awareness Exercise #7

This Is Your Life

Think about a movie of your life. You are an actor in this movie. Write out your responses to the following:

- *What type of movie is it* — A soap opera, comedy, adventure series, tragedy, modern day, olden days, future time, a combination of these?
- *Are you the main character* — Or do you just go along for the ride? Are you the hero/heroine, bad, good, mean, cruel, slap happy, a victim, ulcer giver, crusader? Any title other than those given?
- *How does the audience react* — Do they want their money back? Do they cry, laugh, boo, clap, fall asleep, identify, or do they think there is no plot?
- *Can the audience pick or identify your goals?*
- *Scene Analysis:*
  Think of the *worst* scene in your movie — Who is in it? Where is it happening? What is happening? Why is it so? How do you feel? What do you think? What do you do?
- Now, *redo* the above *scene analysis* for your *best* scene.
- *Relive the worst scene. BUT* you are now the director and the producer. Select your own cast. Select and set your own scenes. See and hear yourself in control doing neat, positive, growth-producing scenes. You are in charge of your life.

DO THINGS TO MAKE YOUR MOVIE END YOUR WAY

- *List 10* positive things *you will do* to have your best scene occur more often.
- *Redo a movie specifically for each of these areas of your life:* work life, social life, recreational life, and family life.

No words can effectively describe the sheer joy of discovery realized when we can go beyond our own past. Your script analysis thus far has permitted you to start to develop a new awareness. Now, we would like you to take time and redo the "This Is Your Life" exercise for your personal life as it was the last 10 days. *Write out all responses.*

Now, look at the last "This Is Your Life" script. Select one other character that is in your "movie."

- Note any hidden/underhanded or secret purposes or goals you feel this person has. _____
- List any hidden weapons or persuaders this person uses on you (guilt trips laid on you or intimidations or power plays). _____
- List put-downs/verbal memories this person lays on you. _____
- What personal filters do you think this person has to keep him/her from seeing the situation as it is? _____
- To what extent does this person share or conceal from others his/her feelings (verbal/nonverbal)? _____
- How does this person threaten you or others? _____
- Now, repeat the above with you as the character. _____

Are you motivated by power, control, inclusion, love needs? Are you after security, knowledge? Do you view the things about yourself in total? Are you a detail person? Do you focus on the theme of your school or the nitty gritty?

My View: Awareness Exercise #8

1. Name five basic reasons why people work?
   A_____ B_____ C_____
   D_____ E_____
2. People differ in many ways. Can you list three ways other than in appearance and speech?
   A_____ B_____ C_____
3. Name three ways people learn.
   A_____ B_____ C_____
4. Of all the factors in the learning process, which is considered the most important? _____
5. Your job skills include getting things done and delegating work. Can you name three others?
   A_____ B_____ C_____
6. "After identifying" the problem, what are the five steps to making a good decision?
   A_____ B_____ C_____
   D_____ E_____
7. Name three principles for creating good job relations.
   A_____ B_____ C_____
8. Name your most common form of communication on the job.
9. Define the word "honesty" as it relates to your job. _____

We are living in a day when the number of personal interactions can create stress. Look at your answers to Exercise #8. Do you feel others in your building or district hold similar views? If not, the interactions noted are potential stressors.

Developing awareness is a good first step toward executive well-being. Identified stressors allow us to choose how much or how little weight we will grant to each. Unknown stressors, confronting us in a crisis situation, can trigger complete and total negative reactions.

We are in charge when we dare to look at reality.

3. Tolerance

DROPOUT BEHAVIOR is caused by an accumulation of intense negative feelings that are so debilitating that a person withdraws from the situation in which those feelings are generated, even if they started elsewhere.

This withdrawal may be physical; for example, a person may actually quit a job or leave a setting where intense negative feelings are experienced. The withdrawal can also be psychological in the sense that people may cut back on their commitment to jobs, or "tune out" when there.

Administrators are among those who may suffer this form of dropping out. For example, it may occur if a person "takes home" intense frustration developed at work so that the majority of time, both at home and at work, is spent feeling frustrated. Therefore, the person spends less time at work, sees fewer staff, and may even quit the job in order to escape the frustration.

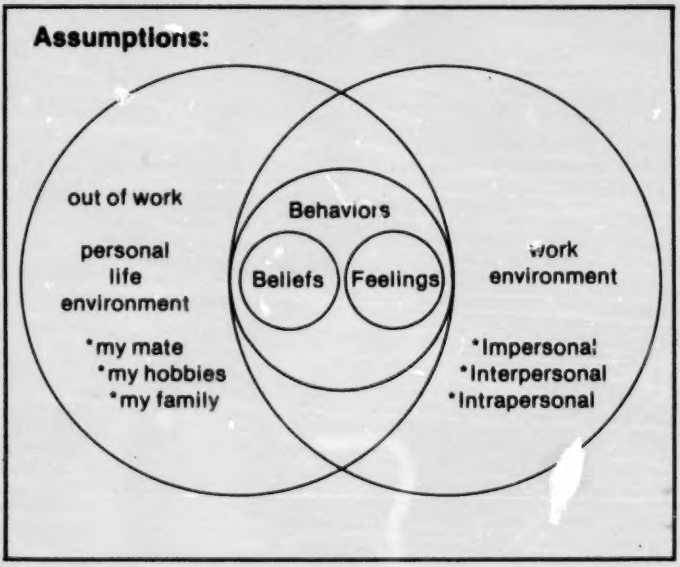
It is difficult to estimate the amount of personal time lost in absenteeism, in on-the-job inefficiency, or in quitting. However, of greater concern is the toll taken on administrators enduring this form of drop out. By and large these people feel trapped by their desire to help other people and to give others means to solve problems. Yet, such people experience debilitating negative feelings (frustration, anger, sadness, hopelessness, etc.) while trying to do their jobs. These intense feelings combined

with the resolve to continue despite the feelings, exact a heavy toll on administrators' lives and the lives of those around them.

This chapter will explore tolerance as a means to maintain executive well-being. Administrators frequently don't know how to tolerate stress. They stockpile "hurts" and kill their idealism to the extent that it causes them to drop out of the world of work.

There are two different sources of stress leading to dropout behavior. The first source is the environment. The second source is personal process. The environment can lead to dropping out in the sense that it hinders or works against the things that administrators are trying to do. Personal process can lead to dropout behavior in the sense that individual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors may lead them to interpret, experience, and act on their environment in ways that produce more frustration, anger, or other drop-out feelings that the environment itself can produce.

This chapter includes some instructions for individual action that you might take in order to confront the dropout factors that are relevant to you. It might generate some ideas for you on how to deal with those factors in your situation.



1. Each of us is affected by the environment(s) in which we live.
2. Each of us, to a greater or lesser extent, also manufactures our own reality through mechanisms such as defensiveness, selective perception and vigilance, projections, stereotypes, etc.
3. Behavior is influenced from the outside in (e.g., environment reinforces/punishes, etc.), *and* from the inside out (e.g., by beliefs about how the world works and our feelings about events).
4. We can and do act on the environment to make it consistent with our beliefs (expectation/self-fulfilling prophecies) and to elicit from it experiences that confirm our feelings about ourselves.
5. List the positive and negative feelings generated as you think about the out-of-work environment.
6. List the positive and negative feelings generated as you think about the work environment.
7. Look at lists 5 and 6 and then note how the feelings and beliefs triggered at work affect the out-of-work environment and how the feelings and beliefs triggered in the out-of-work environment carry over into the work environment (e.g., my mate caused me an awful upset before work and I dumped on one of the other staff members; or, at work a parent got me so upset that when I got home I dumped on my family).

To understand how dropout behaviors develop and how we can avoid being the victim of such behavior, let us examine the concepts underlying them. An individual's most frequent self-manufactured negative feelings occur when we feel there is "my way and the wrong way."

Development of tolerance occurs through early learning that some feelings are acceptable and some are not. For example, for many boys, sadness expressed through crying is punished, but expression of anger is accepted and possibly reinforced.

We overlearn certain feelings because they give us higher payoff and stimulation. Tolerance is related to those things at which we are practiced. We are more practiced being angry than sad. The behavior more practiced and acceptable as the expressable one comes out in later life. Stress feelings are more intense; we get more intense internal reaction. Thus, if a command said in a

calm voice gets no action, but a screaming command causes a response, then we learn lack of tolerance by using the more intensive behavior.

Tolerance Training and Early Benefits

These beliefs are retained intact from the time of childhood decisions unless a person re-decides beliefs. Such a redecision usually is based on adult perceptions rather than a childhood perspective.

No two of us are alike. Each of us is *somebody*. Each of us wants to have our own way of behaving. Each of us has a different expectancy in terms of how fast or slow (tempo) we do things. We have different feelings about how close or far from another person we should or could be (spatial needs). We have different expectations about time needs as well as about other needs.

You are a person unique and different from others. Your walking and talking style may bother or please others. Spatial needs, tempo factors and time needs, also unique to you, may bother or please others.

You also belong to groups. Some you select because their members respect things you respect. You are since birth a member of a specific ethnic, family, and geographical group.

People tend to have strong views on how things should be, but we must live together. The major block occurs because we do not permit others to see the world through their own eyes. People have different tempos, styles, and spatial needs; but not everyone can accept this and such people move quickly to block any attempt at trying to look at alternative ways of behaving. Tolerance demands serenity on our part to become aware and then to make decisions about our response to the environment, people, and philosophies in it.

In the past, one of the school's major tasks was to level differences between and among people. Currently, there are pressures to have the school recognize, accept, and teach about these differences. What problems do you think this will cause if: You live in an all-white school district. You live in an all-black school district. You live in a "mixed" school district.

American living is exciting because we have choices. What

would life in or out of school be like if we restricted choices? Choice is based on differences. Not only are ideas different for individual people and groups, but their actions are different also. Thus, events, people, or things one person or group feels to be of great importance may not be of importance to others. Can you list examples of things, events, or people good for one group but detrimental to another group?

Groups that live in the same area but have different ideas are pluralistic groups. Schools in America are pluralistic. List three differences you and fellow administrators have related to: arbitration, teachers, unions, government regulations, etc. Now list three ways these differences could cause problems. What three ways could you prevent these differences from causing problems?

This is a multi-cultural and multi-expectancy culture. Tolerance demands we go beyond our oughts and shoulds. Subtle blocks are stressors and tolerance is a weapon on your behalf.

A ritual is a socially programmed use of time where everybody agrees to do the same thing. A ritual is structured by others, demands no commitment to or involvement with another person, and has a predictable outcome. There are social rituals, school rituals, greeting rituals, and so on, all designed to structure the use of time so people will not have to get close to each other.

A ritual of going to the ball game every week or to Joe's Bar makes us "feel" or "appear" to be included with the gang. The fact is, we are participating in a legitimate method of avoiding intimacy via these bar visits or attendance at the baseball game. We are at the same event, but not really intimate.

Rituals are socially accepted forms of withdrawal. Both rituals and withdrawals do not permit us to get involved with people. List two rituals you follow and think about why you follow them. How do they offer subtle blocks to your behavior? Often rituals come out as small talk. Can you tolerate small talk at the emotional level? These tolerance behaviors allow us to minimize our actions and reactions. They also should aid us to maintain the dignity of our administrative role, our own esteem, and the dignity and esteem of others.

We get into difficulty when we are unaware of the stressor, when we stockpile our emotional hurts, and when we attach more importance than we should to the stressor. At times, with-

out the mind set of tolerance or maintenance as a weapon against stress, we *emotionally* drop out of the world of work.

Emotional Management as a Tolerance Tool

The most frequent problem in our relations with each other is the way we deal with emotions. Although we continually experience feelings about ourselves and others we have problems constructively expressing them to others. We know that feelings are a natural part of being human, but we often let them become the source of problems in living and working with each other. Our failure to use our feelings effectively causes trouble.

We are conditioned not to express real feelings. We get around dealing with emotions by:

1. Covering them up — not letting people know when we are angry or sad; acting "nice" or "cool" all the time.
2. Saying "You shouldn't feel that way!" If someone is unhappy, we say "cheer up." If someone is angry, we say "simmer down and act your age." If someone is happy, we say "watch out, it won't last for long."
3. Stating general rather than personal feelings. "We all feel discouraged," instead of "I feel discouraged." "Everyone had a good time," instead of "I had a good time."
4. Discussing past feelings instead of here-and-now feelings. The closer feelings are to the here-and-now and to you and me, the harder they are to discuss openly. It is easier to tell a person you were angry with what he did a year ago or last week or yesterday than it is to tell him you are angry right now.

We fear feelings because often blame is involved. We say, "YOU made me angry," instead of saying, "I'VE become angry with the way you talk to me." When you say, "You made me angry," it means that I must change so that you will be happy. I become the "bad guy." And that might not be true. There are constructive ways of expressing feelings and checking out how others are feeling. We can learn some communication skills to bridge the interpersonal communication gap. This set of skills allows us minimally to tolerate stress and in the long run reduce it.

Blocking Behaviors

When we have desires which conflict, we have frustration. For example, if you want to tell your supervisor of a newer technique, but at the same time you may not wish to get off on the wrong foot. Write out one example of frustration caused by conflicting desires you experienced this week. Is it one you can live with over a long term, or is it something that in the end you or the supervisor will have to change? In either event can you tolerate it in the short-run and reconsider its weight as a priority?

People also become frustrated when they have desires which cannot be gratified. Several people can make decisions as sensible as the supervisor's, but only one, by policy is permitted to do so. If time limits the availability of the supervisor, a person may be forced to make a decision or become frustrated. Write out one example of frustration based on a desire that was not realized. Did you take a win-or-lose, a wait-and-see, or an acceptance of differences attitude? Tolerance requires a problem-solving rather than a win/lose approach.

We all have wants and desires that motivate our behaving. When these are blocked, frustration is likely to occur. Do *not* attribute frustration to causes like these:

- Everyone is against me.
- This agency blocks my every move.
- The supervisor is not really my friend, etc.

Five ideas are vital for feedback to ourselves:

1. No one can satisfy all desires, therefore, a person must learn to live with frustration.
2. People develop desires which are impossible to satisfy.
3. Friends often support impossible desires and create more frustration for the individual in the agency role.
4. People develop desires which conflict.
5. Motives not shared create as much of a problem as unmet desires.

Can you think of ideas suggested by the above? Questions to consider:

1. Why do people's motives sometimes conflict?
2. Why are conflicting motives disturbing?
3. Why do we have desires?
4. How do people behave when their desires are not met?

Prolonged frustration is dealt with differently by different people. Some people don't let it bother them, and when they do react they react positively. Others cannot tolerate even minimal frustration and may be unable to react positively to change designed to reduce the frustration. This is a block. Apathy, aggressiveness, or escapist behavior often follows frustration. Prolonged frustration may result in anxiety, a form of mental distress or uneasiness. In this state a person often feels something unpleasant is going to happen, and the person may begin to behave differently.

People who respond to frustration by apathy or withdrawal try to dispose of their feelings of frustration by "giving up" their desires. If this happens too often they may structure their lives around fantasy or an imaginary world. Some frustrated people structure their lives so they lose interest in things, events, and people. They are always tired and do not enter real life. We call this state depression.

Destructive behavior often follows periods of high frustration. This behavioral reaction is called aggression. Frustrated individuals or groups may attack things, events, or people they consider to be causes of their disappointments. When it is impossible to attack the cause, they attack other things, events, or people. We call this displaced aggression. All of us have done this one time or another.

No matter how hard we try, we must learn to live with frustration that comes from our physical environment. Social frustration is man-made, and as with frustration caused by natural causes, is never completely in our control. A certain amount of social frustration is unavoidable.

Escape as a form of control is important for mental health. One way of controlling frustration is by getting away from the environment where it occurs. Escape can also mean a change in mental point of view. Knowledge helps that happen.

One insight we would like to pass on to you is that tolerance based on the world of *Is*, is easier than living with the world of *Oughts* and *Shoulds* (e.g., we ought to disagree . . . should never back down).

What the Problem Looks Like

Blocking behavior is defined as that behavior which occurs

when an individual perceives or expects threats. People who block, even though they give some energy to the common task, devote an appreciable portion of their verbal, physical, and emotional energy to defending themselves. The verbal blocking is often done to impress, dominate, escape, avoid, or minimize a perceived assault on their person. Many people actually try to talk themselves out of or into illness as a blocking mechanism.

Inner feelings, emotional states, outward behavior, when uncontested block us out of change and into one mode of behavior. Blocking behavior develops defensive listening, which in turn produces nonverbal block (facial, postural, movement) and thus, causes the message sender to build up personal defenses.

A circular process is set up and we and the other person end up blocking each other. We censor our messages before we send them and the other person selectively listens. Uptight people block more and more of the messages they send as well as the messages they receive. The converse is true. If you reduce your blocking behaviors other people will lower their blocking mechanisms.

Questions as Tolerance Strategies: What the Skill Looks Like

The skill makes use of questions: that seek more information; that are open ended; that reflect feeling; that are spontaneous; that focus on a problem orientation; that make use of behavior description. Reduction of blocking behaviors demands limited use of judgmental, evaluative, and certain types of verbal and nonverbal actions.

Implicit in all attempts of helping persons is the assumption that the person to be altered is inadequate. Methods of blocking are varied. Too much focus on detail, restrictive regulations and policies, norms for total conformity, and long drawn out "professional" training often are blocking mechanisms.

Practice in the Skills

Do an assessment of the times you have solved problem situations with persons by use of dogmatic behavior. Assess the times you felt you needed to be right; as wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem. Then, focus on the kind of thoughts the above generates, and consider the following:

Sample Reference

When we have persistent problems but are afraid to confront the person causing the problems, we experience every type of blocking behavior possible.

14 Kinds of Clarifying Techniques: Questions for Accepting and Clarifying

The questions suggested below are intended to foster acceptance and clarification of a person's ideas. They may be used to facilitate group interaction and discussion, or to reduce unwanted behavior.

1. *Clarifying purpose:* What is your goal in using this approach? What are you after? Why are you doing it?
2. *Clarifying definitions:* What do you mean when you say that . . .? What would be some examples of your idea?
3. *Clarifying the sources of ideas:* What groups or authorities agree with you? Where were these ideas started? Where could we get data to support your ideas? Is that based on personal experience or on data or both?
4. *Extending other's views:* Could we hear more? How might we find out more about your views? How can we help you build on your ideas? Do you have other reasons for saying that? What would be examples of your idea?
5. *Clarifying how long the person has held an idea:* Is this a current belief you hold? Have you been feeling this way long? Do you feel you will always think that?
6. *Clarifying crucial factors:* Which event was most significant in causing you to feel this way? What incident aided you most in forming your point of view?
7. *Pointing out inconsistencies:* Is this consistent with other points of view expressed by you?
8. *Questioning usefulness:* Would it be beneficial for us? Could we make that idea work for our group? Is this something you (value) (need) (like)? What are some bad things about the idea?
9. *Considering consequences:* If we were to use your idea, what might we anticipate? Would your implemented idea create a better situation? Where will your idea take us?
10. *Clarifying the strength of an idea:* How sure are you? Could any other points of view be valid?

11. *Considering alternatives:* What other choices might the group make? Was this your only choice? What other possibilities are there?
12. *Pointing out similarities and dissimilarities of ideas:* In what ways is that similar to Bill's point of view? Where do you and Bill differ?
13. *Summarizing:* Can one of you recall the facts we discussed? Who can play back the data we have uncovered?
14. *Creating opportunity for insight and evaluation:* If given the opportunity, what might you have done differently? How did you feel while you were doing that? Would you do the same thing over again? What would you change?

These tolerance techniques are often overlooked because we have not assessed the stressors, our reactions, our mind sets, and our early childhood beliefs.

Tolerance is a two-way street. It demands good communication. It is more passive than other forms of dealing with stress. It asks us to think before we dare to act. Often tolerance ends at the internal, rational thinking phase. Wait it out after thinking it through. These principles are of importance to administrators wanting to tolerate stress.

Implication for Tolerating Stress and Stressors

1. Do not expect total and complete communication to occur in one setting. It takes a long time to build similar vocabularies. Building trust also takes time.
2. Do not expect the sender and the receiver to be on the same wave length at the same time. Past and current experiences must be recalled as real considerations.
3. Inconsistent responses do not mean inconsistency, but may be indicative of more reception occurring, or better sending, or a combination of both. Keep in mind that if people are hearing what you are saying, they may change their minds as they come to understand more fully your message. Do not think of this as inconsistency.

Even the most intelligent administrators will commit gross blunders when they become hostile and stressed. The stress reaction causes problems both on and off the job. Stress tolerance is a step beyond awareness. It should be engaged in only if the awareness of the stressor isn't enough to satisfy your needs (e.g.,

being aware that you have high blood pressure can often reduce your worry about it because you go directly to medical management of the problem; but, if you worry every day so much about death that you miss living, then stress tolerance is to be employed). If awareness generates anxiety, tension, and distrust rather than relief, you should employ the tolerance concepts noted earlier.

Again, reexamination of any stress accumulation, early childhood beliefs, communication skills, and acceptance are the keys of tolerance.

4. Stress Reduction

STRESS REDUCTION CAN involve a number of concepts, but one that stands out is relaxation. Relaxation can be a disco party, a nap, a discussion with an old friend, gardening, a hard game of basketball, or an afternoon of tennis. But many administrators are "work engaged," or tense, while gardening, while on the tennis court, while watching a movie.

When all is said and done, we must learn to counteract some of our internal coping and defense mechanisms. Among these mechanisms are rapid heartbeat; an influx of adrenalin; and tensing of the back and neck muscles. Life-threatening situations may be scarce in today's world, but we react in these same ways our ancestors did when others attack our ideas, goals, and dreams; when we feel excluded; when our pride and esteem are in jeopardy; and when financial or political security appear uncertain. Full-blown stress is when we perceive all of the above and we are powerless to react.

The rate, speed, and amount of change can also cause stress. We feel the reactions as tight jaws; clenched fists; grinding teeth; or as unexplained tenseness.

Some people try to reduce stress by becoming more involved. People going through a divorce often take on so many things to keep busy they end up exhausted. What can we do as administrators when our world threatens us?

If you are the typical, hyper, "type A" person who runs on

eight cylinders 24 hours a day, the only way you can relax is to begin to reverse your habits by recognizing your automatic reactions. You may wish to try these practical suggestions that can be employed as stress reduction techniques:

Stress Reduction Concepts on the Job

- Ask your secretary not to interrupt you in at least one conversation or meeting each day (your most important one).
- Read at least one article each day while all calls are held.
- Plan down-time or idle-time every day.
- Grab a folder and walk around the building each day as if you were going to the other end of the building (on a nice day, do this outside).
- Have a private retreat where you are off limits to everyone for from two to five minutes every hour or so (the restroom is as good a place as any).
- Avoid irritating and overly competitive people prior to lunch or near the end of the school day.
- Concentrate on one task at a time so accomplishment is enjoyed.
- At least three days a week have lunch away from the job with non-school people, or with conversation not school related.
- Practice mini-mind trips where you visualize a scene that is especially comforting to you (about 60 to 120 seconds each day).
- Design your daily calendar so you have a chance to perform at least one activity each day at which you are good.
- Interact at least once each day with someone in your school who makes you laugh.
- Think about involvement in outside activities which provide personal satisfaction.

Stress Reduction External to the Job

- Learn to plan a free weekend every other weekend.
- Avoid situations where you have to wait by shopping during off hours; going to a matinee; eating before or after the supper crowd.

- Cut back on the number of things you try to do when you're out on the town.
- If you have a family, do a small but in-depth one-to-one activity with each family member during the course of each month.
- Develop a vacation attitude after work (treat your home as your vacation home).
- Live by the calendar, not the stop watch.
- Plan easy-going, non-structured vacations, three to four days in duration.
- Get involved with a friend, spouse, or child in an activity which will teach you new concepts, new skills, or new processes (this is a person-to-person commitment as well as a chance to expand your skills).
- Devise a three-times-per-week, 20-minute physical activity schedule—like jumping rope or riding a stationary bike.

Stress as a Positive Force in Its Own Reduction

- Use time stress for motivation to intelligently schedule a full two weeks' activities with detailed daily schedules.
- Use the stress of family or personal friends' needs to allow you to block in time to listen to them or to be with them.
- Use the stress of wanting to achieve to be employed in highly visible short-term tasks with relatively concrete goals (the school carnival).
- Use stress as a stimuli against which you react to redesign your goals so they are realistic.
- Use time binds to pressure yourself into making a list of priority items on which your energy and time will be spent.
- Use the stress of feeling isolated and superficial in human relationships to push yourself into risk-taking with old friends. You may wish to do this by jointly working through the processes found in any of the self-help books available.

Problem-solving Processes as Stress Reduction Behavior

Problem-solving is simple, or complex, or non-existent. Knowing how you react in a conflict situation is critical for problem-solving. The problem is important, but your method of

problem-solving or conflict-resolution is also vital. Consider the following scenario:

> You have been asked to scan some personnel forms as part of an administrative function because you are on the district personnel selection committee. As you scan the personnel folder, the phone rings. The call is from a superior about an overdue district report.
>
> So you get out the file, but in so doing your eye catches the "urgent" mail pile. The letter on top is one complaining about the sex education program held last Tuesday, while you were off to one of those government training programs.
>
> You drop the file, head for the health education coordinator's office to discuss the matter. On the way, you pass the auditorium and a mini-assembly seems to be out of control. You make your physical presence known until the high school crowd calms down.
>
> You continue, but halfway down the hallway you smell the coffee in the cafeteria and stop in to have a cup.

Thus far, you haven't started anything but trouble. If you have a tendency to be easily distracted, to shot-gun your efforts, react to non-priority situations, you will wind up with a great deal of stress because you will accomplish nothing.

A good stress reduction method is the problem-solving method of making a "Must Do List" and a "Can Wait List." List the three most important jobs that generally face you every day. Then tackle them, one at a time. The regularity of these tasks, plus the awareness by your staff that you are not to be interrupted during this period, does reduce stress. Don't leave any of these three "Must Do" items half-done.

People who reduce stress via the list method of problem-solving rarely let themselves be trapped by diversions or interruptions. They decide what comes first, stick with it, and feel the joy of accomplishment early in the day.

Stress can also be reduced by using a more traditional problem-solving flow. To reduce the stressors, involve at least one other person in your building. The following eight-step process has general use and can be done in as little as five minutes. It also

gives you a chance to talk out a concern around a structured flow.

Problem-Solving

1. Write the problem down.
2. Clarify. (Make sure that everyone understands what everyone means.)
3. List the indicators that the problem or the behavior exists.
4. Determine the most important indicators.
5. Rewrite the problem as a positive statement.
6. Brainstorm alternatives to reduce or eliminate key indicators.
7. Select those alternatives which are most easily implemented and write an action plan.
8. Make provisions for evaluation and feedback.

If a problem, or task list, or a problem-solving flow, fail you, back up and assess your style of reducing stress and of responding to conflict. (See stress reduction form.)

Fill in the following stress reduction forms based on your life in general. Write out eight conflicts felt through the times indicated in Form A. Note in the center column the letters indicating the options that you used in reduction of the problem (column three). Note which options you used most often and which are satisfactory to you. These are conflict resolution options noted for life in general. They become ways of reducing stress.

Stress Reduction Analysis
Form A

Feedback to Me . . . on . . .

PRACTICE VIEWING OUR OWN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

IDENTIFY CONFLICTS AS FOLLOWS:

1-2 in the last 12 months:

1.

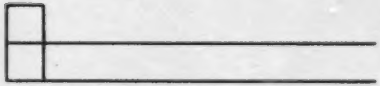
2.

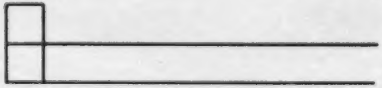
1-2 in the last 5 years:

1.

2.

PREVIOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS
How did you deal with it? For each conflict, choose one or more of the stated options. Enter the letter in the box beside it, or write your own options.





CONFLICT RESOLUTION/STRESS REDUCTION OPTIONS

A. I gave in/gave up

B. I endured and hoped it would get better

C. I withdrew from the scene of conflict

D. I was antagonistic and demanding

E. I compromised

1-2 in the last 10 years:

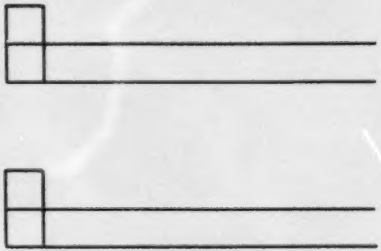
1.

2.

Conflicts from anytime in your life:

1.

2.



F. I did something else of top value when I recognized I couldn't do anything about this

G. Someone solved it for me

H. I made a choice as to what was most important and did something about it

I. I used my abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.)

SUMMARY:

Which option(s) have you most often used in responding to your conflicts? _____

_____

Is it satisfactory to you? _____ Which option do you prefer to use to respond to your conflicts?

_____

Can you reduce your stresses by using options C, E, F, and H? This analysis is useful for assessment of your life in general.

_____

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Stress Reduction Through Conflict Analysis Form B

How do you usually handle job conflicts in the job world? After each of the following techniques, indicate whether you use it frequently, occasionally, or rarely.

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
1. Avoid the person	___	___	___
2. Change the subject	___	___	___
3. Try to understand the other person's point of view	___	___	___
4. Try to turn the conflict into a joke	___	___	___
5. Admit that you are wrong, even if you do not believe you are	___	___	___
6. Give in	___	___	___
7. Apologize	___	___	___
8. Try to find out specifically what you agree on and disagree on to narrow the conflict	___	___	___
9. Try to reach a compromise	___	___	___
10. Pretend to agree	___	___	___
11. Get another person to decide who is right	___	___	___
12. Threaten the other person	___	___	___
13. Fight it out politically	___	___	___
14. Whine or complain until you get your way	___	___	___

Mental Relaxation as Stress Reduction

Another form of stress reduction is based on visualization and guided imagery. This method makes use of that part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which controls a number of the body's functions. The hypothalamus collects information by way of touching, seeing, hearing, and so on, and uses the data to cause the body to react in a predictable and appropriate manner.

Thus, if you see a student about to be harmed, it's your

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
15. Play the martyr: Give in, but let the other person know how much you are suffering	___	___	___

Most of us use different techniques for resolving conflicts with different people. Sometimes people in different situations require different techniques—you may not be able to talk to your boss the way you talk to your best friends. But often we use a very limited number of techniques with certain people.

Targets Who May Create Conflict

After each group of people listed below, indicate by number the techniques listed above that you most frequently use to resolve conflict with them. Disregard those groups of people that do not apply to you. Then, for each group, list any techniques you might be able to use effectively that you do not now use.

	Techniques Now Used	Techniques You Might Be Able To Use
—Parents	_____	_____
—Staff Members	_____	_____
—Non-student Teens	_____	_____
—Students	_____	_____
—Office Personnel	_____	_____
—Supervisors	_____	_____
—Central Office People	_____	_____
—Other	_____	_____

hypothalamus that gets your adrenaline rushing and heart pumping so you can react quickly and appropriately. When you smell a sizzling steak, or *just recall* the danger the student faced, your hypothalamus is called into play. It can respond to a symbolic replication of the event as well as to the actual event. Thus, if you watch a horror movie, you may actually notice the heart beats faster. If you see a picture of a lovely, calm beach, you can become tranquil. The hypothalamus allows you to

imagine the lovely, calm beach and experience the same tranquility as when you saw the beach.

Here is how this stress reduction idea works:

> Picture a calm scene and the hypothalamus triggers reactions inside of you that cause you to feel that sense of calmness. If you desire, you can review an actual picture of that scene, or "see" the scene by way of music that rekindles the situation in your mind's eye.

The thoughts that occupy our minds are the thoughts that guide our actions. Mental relaxation is a key to reduce stress or anxiety. The techniques used have different names, but in one way, they are similar. They involve breathing techniques. The basic technique follows:

- Sit or lie down
- Uncross your arms or legs
- Shut your eyes
- Breathe in through your nose
- Count internally to three as you do that
- Breathe out through your mouth to a count of five
- Do this cycle of breathing 10 times
  - —Visualize yourself in a positive scene
  - —See the scene in great detail
  - —See yourself doing only positive things
  - —After three to five minutes, just drift "awake"

After your short but relaxing experience, re-close your eyes and "see" three positive things you will want to do:

- One for yourself
- One for a person you have not seen or been in touch with for awhile
- One for a person you see and interact with every day

You control reduction of stress by initiating some action that puts you back in a leadership role.

5. Stress Management

STRESS MANAGEMENT IS rooted in the thesis that the human mind and body have great natural ability for self-adjustment and self-repair. To manage stress reactions and to reduce damage incurred during past stress situations, a person must be able to release sudden tensions, to assay a situation objectively and without anxiety, to stay relaxed when appropriate, and to disassociate from a stressor mentally and possibly physically.

The administrator must have a positive attitude toward handling stress situations, be capable of self-assertion in the face of external pressures, and have appropriate and selective adaptability. In short, the administrator must be capable of facing life.

The following stress management technique can be used at any staff meeting as well as for your own benefit.

Stress Management of Interpersonal Conflict

This 10-point process flow for stress management makes use of written responses on 3" x 5" cards. Get 10 cards and number them 1 through 10.

Card One: Describe in detail an existing interpersonal conflict you must manage.

Card Two: Determine if this conflict is between (a) your goals and the other person's goals; (b) your differing ap-

proaches to the same goal; (c) your needs and the other person's needs; (d) your values and the other person's values; (e) differing role expectations. Write out a bit about which (a, b, c, d, e) the conflict entails.

Card Three: Elaborate your response on Card Two, going into as much detail as required.

Card Four: List all possible ways in which you might manage this conflict. Don't cut this step short; it is a vital one.

Card Five: Consider each of the alternatives you have listed on Card Four in terms of your "rival's" probable reaction:

1. If I _____ (re-write your Card Four conflict management strategy), then the other person would...
2. If I _____, then the other person would...

This format is repeated for at least 10 potential alternatives selected from the list on Card Four.

Card Six: Considering your rival's probable responses, which alternatives would satisfy both of you? Good stress management is basically a win/win situation.

Card Seven: Can you adapt the top two solutions in any way so you both can be satisfied more fully?

Card Eight: Previously, you considered the other person's probable reaction to the solution(s). How can you help that person react more positively?

Card Nine: Assuming the most feasible solution(s) does not wholly satisfy your own needs, what else might you do to satisfy these needs?

Card Ten: List the strengths you possess which might be employed by you in putting these ideas into action.

This 10-step process allows you to manage stress by use of effective problem-solving. The use of *a written response* is part of the technique of involving the body as a stress management tool.

Managing Stress by Managing Your Time

Time is not flexible. Everyone is allotted 24 hours each day. We can get more time for work only at the expense of our time for self-renewal and for self-improvement. Self-renewal time is down time, when a person does something that is enjoyable and renewing without guilt.

To manage stress as it relates to time-imposed stressors, let us view the kinds of time administrators face on the job. The primary type is *system-imposed* time, which is used in meeting federal, state, regional, local, and district legal or regulatory demands. System time requires conferences, memoranda, phone calls, grant document reviews or preparation, etc., and carries with it a high priority for compliance.

Central office administrators' time is consumed in meeting higher administrators' immediate requirements. Their demands have highest priority and are often dumped into the system on a crisis basis. Threats of compliance work at an informal level and create stress in subtle and often nonacceptable styles.

Self-imposed time is determined by our own agenda and requirements, resulting from our own personality and needs we bring to the job. This time is often given lowest priority, while system and central office administrators' time take top priority.

Are you the kind of administrator who gives in to all system and central office demands? Are you the prima donna, the knight who demands complete control of all time and function in your building? Either extreme of compliance creates stress.

List your time demands by title:

A) *System Imposed* B) *Central Office* C) *Self-Imposed*

1. _____ _____ _____
2. _____ _____ _____
3. _____ _____ _____
4. _____ _____ _____

Which do I feel create the least stress?
Which do I feel create the most stress?
When can I do the self or system demanded task to reduce its negative effects on my day?
Which Column A or B tasks can be delegated?

Balance is required to manage stress, and, as administrators, you must find ways most comfortable for you and your building's clients.

"I do" time means you forget your title and do the task without involving subordinates. "I am an employee" is the theme. It allows you a form of stress management; others view you as part of the front-line team.

Assignment time means you spend energy in matching tasks to talent and organizing calendars and flow charts for task completion.

Accountability time is the type consumed in assuring assignment time events meet with system and/or central administration's expectations.

Fire-fighting time is used in planning to deal with next year's solutions while living in today's world. Stabilizing the fire fighting must occur in balance. To manage the stress, use time for building-level feedforward planning. Use hindsight, foresight, and out-of-sight thinking to anticipate next year's problems. Use groups of six to 10 staff members in 15-minute sessions biweekly to share their views of the future for your building. Collective wisdom is a stress management tool. Collaboration does work. It shares the joy of victory and spreads out the hurt of failure.

The use of a calendar reduces the stress created when system-imposed time "appears" and you are forced to move to a crisis management level. Group meetings reduce the need for interpersonal accountability. The meetings permit normal discourse about any pitfalls a person may have noticed in discharging tasks. The group norm of cooperation reduces the narrow focus of stress on the top dog.

Much has been written about time and its use. The authors of this text recommend:

The use of a 14-month calendar.

A 10" x 15" weekly calendar with days across the top, and half-hour units running vertically.

A 24" x 30" yearly calendar with months across the top, and days running vertically.

A daily planning sheet.

Daily Planning Sheet

Date_____

Letters To Write

Phone Calls To Make

Person No.

People To See

Things To Be Done

Things To Be Planned

Items To Be Obtained

♦Write priority in this column

Appointments

6:00
6:30
7:00
7:30
8:00
8:30
9:00
9:30
10:00
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Consolidate your available hours. Check on how you now use your day and batch up accumulated available time so it can be productive. Do budget time for system and central administrative imposed time, as your survival depends upon compliance. But most of all, carve out at least one block of self-thinking time when you problem solve, reflect, or relax without any guilt. A positive attitude is part of stress management.

Why do administrators get stressed out and misuse time and energy? The reasons filter out as vital aspects in stress management:

1. The desire to be busy, thus causing the administrator to confuse activity with results;
2. The work-only ethic, with its view that idleness is sin, inhibits the development of beneficial leisure time activities; and
3. Lack of other interests that do not enhance on-the-job success.

In a word, "attitude." You see, stress management is more than knowing and scheduling.

There are four varieties of conflict and several attitude biases at the heart of effective stress management. The four varieties of conflict we administrators meet are:

1. *Who really cares choice,* in which the decision making involves a choice between two approaches to a relatively unimportant goal;
2. *Same goal, but two avenues* to get to that goal, thus only creating conflict over process, not the product;
3. *Either/Or conflict choices* that can cause us to lose sight of a goal, or indeed, cause us not to attain it; and
4. *The No Win choice,* where "heads-I-win, tails-you-lose" is employed.

In conflict variety one, stress may be managed simply by asking yourself this question: "Will the results of this decision make a difference 25 years from now?" Can you recall the *Who Really Cares* choices regarding *long hair, pants suits, smoking areas,* etc? They were important, but as a bottom line the care was not there. Remember: to reduce stress by managing it, the right vs. wrong mentality must only be used for variety three conflicts.

With *Same Goal* choices and conflicts, you reduce and manage stress by allowing the most vocal and most reliable per-

son to use *individual* process to reach the goal. Keep in mind a group process would normally keep the process within the bounds of propriety.

The third and most important variety for stress management deals with true win-or-lose conflicts. You reduce stress with these types of decisions by delegating their analysis to committees or consultants. If you want stress, battle all type three conflicts yourself. To manage stress, defer and delegate.

The fourth variety, the *No Win* choice, is a political type. In the end, all involved lose. Therefore, do not try to manage it. Find the most responsible opponent and try a give-and-take discussion. If it truly is a *no-win* situation, inform your superiors and admit you need help. To manage variety four, asking for help is your best bet.

Attitude Adjustment and Stress Management

The four varieties of conflict and the following bias of attitudes are essential for the administrator who really wants to manage stress. You may wish to write out your thoughts as you explore this section of the monograph.

Attitudes are not values. Attitudes are feelings or emotions with regard to a fact; values are standards of desirability. An attitude might be: "I dislike advisory committee people who are domineering." The corresponding value would be: "Autonomy is desirable and I like to hear everyone's views."

Your attitudes, like any other part of you, are subject to change. You have been told how important your thoughts and your feelings are to your actions. Attitudes are vital to stress management because often they become automatic ways to respond to what happens in life. They become ways to respond to events. Evaluation and judgment become controlled by attitudes, even when data tell you to readvise yourself.

Picture yourself blocking out the data a domineering chairperson might be giving at a meeting. Your attitude will have created stress because, in the long run, the data will be heard. By the time your superintendent hears it, the chairperson may have a large support group who heard the data.

Attitudes increasingly control how you see your world. As controllers, they create much stress.

Apathy is an attitude that is developed. No young child is apathetic. All youngsters explore their world, experience it, and grow. When you are put down consistently, you learn apathy. Apathy is a high level of pent-up hostility. It is a defense, a barrier, against future hurt or disappointment.

But apathy also keeps you from new growth. How did this attitude happen in your life? Think back to your emergence into education and administration. List 10 things about education and administration that excited you the first year (or on the first job). Next, trace the events that flattened or dimmed each of the joys or excitements you listed. At some point in time, the positive attitude of risk participation became apathy.

Note 10 things you are apathetic about now that really excited you five years ago, one year ago, and at the start of this year. You reduce and manage stress by being in charge of this attitude. Make a tentative commitment to an action that will force you to re-open the "file" on your earlier excitement.

A second attitude is capitulation. Capitulation is rooted in failure to believe in your ability to make decisions. The fear is that you will get into trouble or make a wrong decision, so you capitulate. After a while, your building staff knows they must go to your superior, or around you, for a decision. Imagine the stress that creates.

How did you get into this rut that creates much more stress than it alleviates? List five decisions you made in the last month, and note the reasons for your choices. Did you capitulate and give in against your own experience? Did you make a decision to keep the peace? Were the decisions good? If so, list the reasons why. Were they the wrong decisions? How did you know they were wrong? Did you begin to feel you did not know how to make good administrative decisions? What situations do you now face for which you have made no decisions? Are you going to capitulate and give in so another will make the decision? This technique, in the long run, does not reduce stress.

To manage stress created by a capitulative attitude, list tentative actions you will test before rendering a decision.

Apathy and the feeling that we must keep the peace and capitulate lead to the next attitude: *Worry*. Worry develops from lack of predictability. You can't predict the central office, the teachers' association, the advisory committee, and at times,

yourself. Most of these worries are in your head. After several rounds of not being backed up, you may feel you must be on guard. There doesn't have to be an actual event for you to worry about. You develop the attitude, "I must worry," and feel this is preparation for action.

List 10 worries you have, or had, in the last month. Now go back over the list and note if worrying has been a help or a hindrance. You manage stress by knowing what works for you. You manage stress by changing the attitude of worrying to one of confidence in your ability to be of help to yourself or others.

The *"Won't Work"* attitude develops when you are so afraid of being put in social danger, in a situation where your pride may be hurt, you prevent a new idea by claiming that nothing would work. You have to fear loss of pride to be a "Won't Work" person. You have to be willing to dwell on flaws and the potential dangers in any new idea. The standard of the "Won't Work" administrator is perfection, a surefire way to maintain stress.

Think back over your working life and focus on five situations where you had a superior apply the "Won't Work" attitude to your ideas or plans. Do you recall your feelings? Stress can be managed by viewing an event or concept as potentially positive and practical. You manage stress by increasing staff morale. You manage the stress by changing your attitude to one that says I trust my co-workers and their ideas enough that I won't be disappointed as often as I will enjoy their success. I also will have a willingness to accept disappointment with calmness.

Inappropriate, long-held attitudes can create stress. By eliminating them from your working world, you manage stress. Remember: stress management has a flow, starting with awareness. The key to managing stress is managing yourself.

6. Summary Thoughts

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT of excessive stress on administrators poses a most urgent health problem as the national disease patterns shift from infections to tension-linked causes. Everyone thinks he or she is under stress. The literature and research are rich with psychological and physical ideas that should help reduce stress; yet, the concept of stress is vague and a general definition does not exist.

This text addresses itself less to definition and more to the actual stresses school administrators face. It presents an overview of the stressors, a description of self- and building assessment techniques, and instruction in behavioral methods of relaxation. It does this by examination of a four-step process of awareness, tolerance, management, and stress reduction. The book provides a framework rather than a formula, since people's reactions and limits differ.

Stress is a positive force and when and where possible, social and psychological tolerance are recommended as coping techniques. Individuals can control their own behavior, which is a vital stress reduction tool. The life events that relate to individual stress provide an easy assessment scale.

In the past when we had only fight or flight responses, stress reactions were basically those of management of the stressors. Today we realize the body is still using the outdated fight and

flight responses, when either reaction would be inappropriate for most administrators.

This text explores techniques that have worked with practicing administrators in public, private, and military positions.

Ultimately, the concepts and their use for readers depends on their willingness to modify the techniques for implementation in individual settings.

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